

Nagas of Manipur, in Assam, celebrate every year about the end of January. At this great feast the dead are represented by living men, chosen on the ground of their likeness to the departed, who are decked with ornaments and treated as if they were in truth the deceased persons come to life again. In that character they dance together in the large open space of the village, they are fed by the female relations, and they go from house to house, receiving presents of cloth. The festival lasts ten days, but the great clay is the ninth. Huge torches of pine wood are made ready to be used that evening when darkness has fallen. The time of departure of the dead is at hand. Their living representatives are treated to a last meal in the houses, and they distribute farewell presents to the sorrowing kinsfolk, who have come to bid them good-bye. When the sun has set, a procession is formed. At the head of it march men holding aloft the flaring, sputtering torches. Then follow the elders armed and in martial array, and behind them stalk the representatives of the dead, with the relations of the departed crowding and trooping about them. Slowly and mournfully the sad procession moves, with loud lamentations, through the darkness to a spot at the north end of the village which is overshadowed by a great tree. The light of the torches is to guide the souls of the dead to their place of rest; the warlike array of the elders is to guard them from the perils and dangers of the way. At the village boundary the procession stops and the torch-bearers throw down their torches. At the same

moment the spirits
of the dead are believed to pass into the
dying flambeaux
and in that guise to depart to the far
country. There is
therefore no further need for their
living representatives,
who are accordingly stripped of all their
finery on the spot.
When the people return home, each
family is careful to
light a pine torch and set it burning on a
stone in the house
just inside the front door ; this they
do as a precaution
to prevent their own souls from
following the spirits of the
dead to the other world. The expense of
thus despatching
the dead to their long home is very
great; when the head
of a family dies, debts may be
incurred and rice-fields
and houses sold to defray the cost of
carriage. Thus